

bit smoke

Through their association with the Open Music Foundation of Buffalo, New York, Farina and other composers have been developing new methods of delivering compositions through graphical scores. One of Farina's recent pieces for the OMF is *bit smoke*, a composition for a quartet of indeterminate instrumentation. This work features an animated graphical score, which serves as primary musical source material for performers and is projected on screen as an integrated visual element of the piece for audiences. Matthew McDermott and the Chicago City Arts Gallery presented the work's May 2007 premiere. Although the work has been performed in other iterations (starting with a duet version), *bit smoke* was first performed as a percussion quartet by the Third Coast Percussion Quartet (Peter Martin, David Skidmore, Robert Dillon, Owen Clayton Condon).

bit smoke represents a balance of progressive means of musical transmission with a real sense of the historical context in which the piece was composed. The foundation of the composition are the "bits" and "smoke" rendered in the DVD that comprise the main visual vocabulary of the score. In this way, Farina provides thematic unity for the piece without falling into a narrative paradigm, such as that of a silent-film score. Farina sees the images of the score as extensions of the traditional score, which consists mostly of organized dots and lines. At times, the score is divided into four distinct quadrants, allowing for individual musical gestures from the respective performers. At other times, boundaries dissolve, prompting the performers to create group gestures. Performers react to the animated score through their improvisations that reflect the visual information of the DVD. (Notes by Kurt Gartner)

Moving Air

Moving Air is a short, up-tempo work for four percussionists and pre-recorded CD. The tape part consist of various unconventional sounds derived from the slamming of car doors, the breaking of glass, and the collision of garbage cans. These are combined with conventional percussion sounds, all of which have been sampled and triggered to play in sequence, sometimes forward (sounding as they normally do), and sometimes backwards (the sound is reversed so that the decay becomes the attack). The players are instructed to "play it loud!" to create optimum movement of air - hence the title. (Notes by Nigel Westlake)

A Pesar de Todos los Naufragios

A Pesar de Todos los Naufragios (In Spite of all Shipwrecks) is constructed upon the coexistence of a percussion trio, electroacoustic sounds and a fourth percussion player, who navigates (and after the shipwreck swims) in interaction either with the percussion trio or with the electroacoustic sounds, until he finally joins the percussion trio. The percussion ensemble then obviously becomes a percussion quartet.

The spirit of tolerance, respect for diversity, and cooperation that supports the piece is also based upon the achievement of a definite balance between the rigorously written parts and the degrees of freedom left to the players.

There exists no strict synchronization between the music that is played live and the electroacoustic sounds. However, there is a general synchrony necessary for both worlds (yet another aspect of the required cooperation among the two worlds). (Notes by Daniel Maggiolo)

Synchronisms No. 5

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1934, Mario Davidovsky moved to New York City in 1960, the year that Milton Babbitt's Columbia-Princeton electronic music center opened. Davidovsky was a Guggenheim Fellow at Columbia University from 1961-1963. During this period, he began composing his series of *Synchronisms* works, each of which includes combinations of acoustical instruments/voices and electronic sounds: No. 1 (1963) for flute, No. 2 (1963) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, No. 3 (1964) for cello, No. 4 (1967) for chorus, No. 5 (1969) for percussion quintet, and 7 others (1970-2006), each for a different instrument or combination of instruments. Notably, *Synchronisms No. 6* for Piano and Electronic Sound won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1971.

Commentaries by Davidovsky and his contemporaries indicate that strict metrical coordination between performers and fixed media is not always necessary. The performers must be intimately familiar with not only their own parts, but also with those of the other players and the "tape" (fixed media) parts. The score's indications of fixed media events vary from approximations to specifically notated gestures, and responses of the chamber ensemble to fixed media events are somewhat organic in proportion to the specificity of the tape part as indicated in the score. Consequently, the artistic freedom granted within this aesthetic leads to performances that may vary from one iteration of the work to the next. In turn, the perception of performers and audience alike may include a focus not only on rhythmic interplay, but also on aspects of timbre, dynamics, texture, and other musical elements. Also, Davidovsky composed the work in such a way that some moments seem to comprise percussion-generated responses by the tape part, or vice versa. (Notes by Kurt Gartner)

Goldstream Variations

Goldstream Variations (2012) creates an interconnected system through live music and electronics. The variations are scored for musicians on undetermined acoustic instruments combined with electronic/computer artists. The selection of this grouping shapes the aural nature of performance space through the arrangement of performers, loudspeakers, and media. I composed the work in the Goldstream Valley, located in Alaska's Interior, near Fairbanks. The valley is a striking boreal forest that seemingly changes almost every day, due

to the dramatic swings in temperature and endless permutations of light throughout the year, where the longest day is over 21 hours long and the corresponding shortest day is less than 3 hours. *Goldstream Variations* was commissioned by the harpist Erzsèbet Gaál-Rinne, and is dedicated to her. (Notes by Scott Deal)

Electrolution

Electrolution is an electrifying percussion ensemble work that explores the fusion of acoustic and electronic soundscapes. Composed by Dustin R. Lowes, this piece engages the listener through its dynamic energy, intricate rhythms, and innovative use of sound effects. Lowes weaves together both traditional percussion instruments—such as drums, cymbals, and mallet instruments—with electronically generated sounds, creating a bold and immersive auditory experience.

The title *Electrolution* reflects the composer's intent to "electrify" the performance through rhythmic tension and vibrant contrasts in textures. Throughout the piece, sudden bursts of energy are juxtaposed with more atmospheric moments, showcasing the range and versatility of percussion instruments when paired with modern technology.

Listeners can expect a stimulating journey that is both visceral and cerebral, with intricate layering of rhythms driving the momentum forward. Lowes' attention to detail and sensitivity to timbre make *Electrolution* a thrilling piece that will captivate both musicians and audiences alike. (Notes by Neil Dunn)

Ionisation

Beginning in 1916, Edgard Varèse voiced ideas regarding the future directions of music:

"We... need new instruments very badly. Musicians should take up this question in deep earnest with the help of machine specialists. New machines might offer Liberation from the tempered systems, a pitch range extended in both directions, new harmonic splendors obtainable from the use of sub-harmonic combinations now impossible, increased differentiations of timbre, and expanded dynamic spectrum, the feasibility of sound projection in space, and unrelated cross rhythms.

These views are exemplified in *Ionisation*, a composition that is a clear manifestation Varèse's theories of style and expression: Experimental and innovative for that time were his use of anvils, tam-tams, gongs, lions roar, numerous drums, and tom toms, employment of pitch and non-pitch percussion, and utilization of sound clusters (in the coda section). In addition, few compositions have more varied dynamic spectra or contrast and employ unrelated cross rhythms so extensively. (Notes by George Frock)